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SUBJECT: ARMENIA PRESS REACTION: WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT
ON "ARMENIAN REMEMBRANCE DAY"

SUMMARY

11. As they did last year, the Armenian media expressed disappointment that President Bush did not use the term "genocide" in his April 24 "Armenian Remembrance Day" statement. Several newspapers focused on the President's "failure, once again" to honor an alleged promise made while campaigning in 2000 to "properly characterize the genocidal campaign against the Armenian people." Though the text of the President's statement appeared in all newspapers, opposition dailies led with regard to editorial comment. Only one prominent pro-government paper, controlled by the main nationalist party, offered an opinion, which came in the form of quotes from the head of the party's Armenian-American Diaspora arm. Despite the understandable emotionalism surrounding the 90th Anniversary of the 1915 events, reaction to the U.S. statement was not extreme by local standards. End Summary.

"[THEY] DIDN'T SAY IT AGAIN"

12. HAYKAKAN ZHAMANAK, a popular opposition newspaper, summed up media coverage of President Bush's April 24 statement on "Armenian Remembrance Day," in which he did not characterize the events of 1915-1918 as "genocide," with the April 26 front-page title, "[They] Didn't Say It Again." [Note: Newspapers are not published on Mondays in Armenia. There was no print coverage on April 25.]

13. A1-Plus, a pro-western opposition paper, wrote April 26, "The President again resorted to the use of evasive and euphemistic terminology to obscure the reality of Turkey's genocide against the Armenian people."

14. ARAVOT, another opposition newspaper, published an article titled, "They're Not Afraid of Hurting Our Feelings," on April 26. The author reflects on the lack of the word "genocide" in the President's statement, saying, "Maybe [U.S. Presidents] want to recognize it but they can't. There is something very important that hinders [them] from keeping their promises when the time for recognizing genocide comes...Recognition of the Armenian genocide is not in the U.S.'s interests yet, in spite of the influential Armenian community in the U.S."

"BUSH BREAKS HIS PROMISE"

15. YERKIR, a newspaper run by the Armenian Revolutionary Faction Dashnak [part of the governing coalition,] joined opposition newspapers ARAVOT, IRAVUNK, and A1-Plus, in expressing disappointment at what they characterize as a broken campaign promise to "American-Armenians." On April 26, YERKIR, the only pro-government paper that has to date commented on the statement, reported, "In February of 2000, then presidential candidate George W. Bush, campaigning for votes among Armenian voters in the Michigan Republican primary, pledged to properly characterize the genocidal campaign against the Armenian people." The article continues, "In retreating from his promise, the President ignored the counsel of one-hundred and seventy-eight Representatives and thirty-two Senators."

16. IRAVUNK comments, "President Bush again did not use the word 'genocide'...but for Bush's promise to the American-Armenians during his campaign, this would not be a surprise. It comes out that the leader of a superpower like the U.S. can win votes by giving false promises and then breaking them."

17. ARF Dashnak affiliated YERKIR, closely linked to the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), widely quoted ANCA's Armenian-American Executive Director, Aram Hamparian, who said, "This statement, sadly, once again, represents a form of complicity in the Turkish government's shameful campaign to deny a crime against humanity." Hamparian goes on to state, "The Administration's refusal to recognize the Armenian Genocide reflects a broader unwillingness to confront genocide - as evidenced by [its] failure to take decisive steps in Darfur."

EVANS